5414

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION

DATE: May 13, 1952

SUBJECT: Moroccan ICJ Case, Etc.

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Bonnet
Mr. Bruce - U
Mr. van Laethem, French Embassy
Mr. McBride - NE

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1. Ambassador Bonnet expressed the regret of the French Government at the publication by Le Monde of the famous forged report attributed to Admiral Fechteler. He said this action of Le Monde was universally deplored in France and that the reaction of the French press had been strongly unfavorable. He gave as his conclusion that it should not have been published even if it were true.

2. Passing to the Moroccan ICJ case, which was the purpose of his call, Ambassador Bonnet stated that it would avoid an unfortunate misunderstanding between France and the U.S. if certain changes were made in our Rejoinder. He said that in several places political issues had been injected into our legal arguments and that these points would be used by the Nationalists in Morocco. He said that there was some evidence the Nationalists were already stating that our presentation at The Hague proved our basic sympathy with the Moroccan cause.

The Ambassador said that the principal French objections were the three points with which we were already familiar from Paris telegram #6589, April 26. He said that the principal objection with regard to the first point which appears on page 12 of our Rejoinder was that it was a basic attack on the Treaty of Fez. He concluded that to give the Moroccans the impression that we felt the Treaty of Fez was a threat to the public order of Morocco would be most unfortunate and an incitement to disturbances in Morocco. He said this was a basic attack against the French status.

The Under Secretary stated that it was our understanding the case would almost certainly be postponed and accordingly our Legal Adviser, Mr. Fisher, would return to the Department in a few days.

Ambassador Bonnet stated that the point on page 15 of our Rejoinder regarding the Council of Government contained factual errors because this body is not elected and is not on record as objecting to the bond between the French and Moroccan franc. Rather, the statement that is quoted is merely one made by one Nationalist member of the Moroccan Section of the Council of Government. However, our employing this argument will give the Moroccans the impression that we favor the separation of the Moroccan and French currencies.

Finally, Ambassador Bonnet stated the concluding paragraph of the Rejoinder on page 44 was objectionable in that it represented the personal opinion of an official and that it was taken from unapproved minutes since no agreed minutes of the 1939 conversations on Morocco exist. He said that here again this was a purely political problem and that it would be taken by the Moroccans as an indication that we believed the French policy for Morocco is outright annexation rather than association.

The Under Secretary asked if Mr. Fisher had already been apprized of the French objections. Upon being informed that the Legal Adviser had not yet been officially informed of the French objections, the Under Secretary said that he would take this up with Mr. Fisher upon his return to the Department.

3. Ambassador Bonnet stated that he had received a letter from Foreign Minister Schuman to the effect that he wished to discuss the entire North African situation, including Tunisia, with the Secretary in Europe this month. The Ambassador said he would mention this to the Secretary on May 15 but merely wished us to know in advance that the Foreign Minister wanted to examine this situation. He said that present French thinking was that after the return of the Secretary from Europe, Franco-American North African talks should be started in order to avoid problems particularly with our bases in Morocco and to try to advance our mutual targets.

He said it would be particularly helpful if some public statement could be made by us in a press conference that would help Prime Minister Baccouche get the negotiations under way in Tunisia. He said that harm had already been done by the spread of the idea that we would not again back France in the UN on the Tunisian or similar issues.

The Under Secretary inquired if the Mixed Commission had yet been established. The Ambassador replied in the negative but said that the French still hoped Tunisian delegates would be named soon. However, the situation had not been helped by agitation on the part of the Nationalists. He said that the French Government had taken one step forward in freeing Chenik and his fellow cabinet members but it was very difficult to release Bourghiba after the publication in France of letters indicating that he was definitely committed to the forcible ejection of France from Tunisia.

EUR:WE:RHMcBride

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